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Duxbury Clipper

Route 3 Expansion Derailed

By KEITH L. MARTIN

With the restoration of the Greenbush rail line, it looks like any effort to widen Route 3 will have to wait.

Jon Carlisle, a spokesman from the state executive office of transportation and construction, said Friday that under Governor Mitt Romney's "Fix It First Initiative," which prioritizes proposed projects, the Greenbush effort has played a part in delaying the proposed expansion of Route 3.

"In light of the fact that we are moving forward with the Greenbush line, which will give people in the South Shore the ability to use [mass transit], there are no immediate plans to widen Route 3," said Carlisle.

The proposed \$180 million dollar road expansion will now take a back seat to the \$479 million restoration of 17.7 miles of rail service for Greenbush, and that sits fine with Duxbury Selectman Andre Martecchini.

Martecchini sat on the Route 3 South Land Development Task Force that studied the project three years ago, that concluded any effort to widen the roadway might not be the best option.

He said that the group's contention was that during rush hours, motorists are able to use two lanes as well as the break-down lane, the equivalent of two and a half lanes. If you add a lane, but shut down that shoulder, you are now at just three lanes and haven't made that big an impact.

"Yes, there is an increase in capacity, but unless you add an enormous amount of lanes, you will fill up the roadway to capacity," said Martecchini. "If you made it so much easier to get into Boston, those who take mass transit like me would switch [and add more cars]."

He added that while he is not disappointed with the decision not to widen Route 3, the highway does indeed need some work to be done, especially in the on and off ramps.

"A lot of the congestion is due to inefficient interchanges, such as [exit] 16 which goes to Route 18," said Martecchini. "That is a prime example of what causes backups. Adding a lane doesn't help that, so unless these interchanges are involved and I think that can be done separately."

Another issue, said Martecchini, is that even if Route 3 was expanded, there are still traffic jams on the Expressway and at the Braintree split. So even though the expansion projected a savings of five to seven minutes for motorists on Route 3, that extra time would then be eliminated once they got towards these areas.

He said that it was his understanding that a review of the Braintree split was forthcoming by MassHighway's Central Transportation Planning Staff.

One area the task force investigated and would still like to see reviewed is improving the commute to Boston by increasing parking at MBTA stations such as those in Braintree and Quincy.

"The Braintree parking lot, for example, is full by 7 a.m., so you have a lot of people who would use the T if they could get in and park," he said. "It even affects those who have to get into Boston later as they have no place to park for a lunchtime appointment into the city. There's no reason not to develop more parking."

The only positive Martecchini sees towards adding a lane to Route 3 was that it would increase safety by keeping the shoulder open from travel.

As for the impact on Duxbury, he said that traffic won't significantly change in the next two to three years, but if something is not done in 20 years the town will see a longer rush hour period and longer commutes for those making the town their destination.

Martecchini is also a member of the South Shore Coalition, an area planning council, and said the group plans to take up the issue of what's next with Route 3 at their next meeting on Thursday.